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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001563

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: ASD VERSHBOW DISCUSSES REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES
WITH TURKEY

REF: ANKARA 1528

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey for reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In an October 19 visit to Turkey focused primarily on missile defense (ref), ASD Vershbow discussed a broad range of issues related to security in the region with his Turkish counterparts. He pressed MFA leaders to re-engage with Israel, to stay on track with efforts to keep tension low in the Aegean and to find ways to help Azerbaijan manage the political challenges presented by Turkey-Armenia rapprochement. ASD Vershbow presented a proposal to CHOD Basbug and DCHOD Guner recommending enhancement and reform of the High Level Defense Group (HLDG). The Turks asserted that Turkey-Israel relations remained fundamentally sound, expressed concern with the decision to move to a second round of elections in Afghanistan and said they would continue their work to support Iraqi stability and to improve relations with Baghdad and northern Iraq. "Iraq's stability is more important to us than to any other country in the world," said MFA Undersecretary Sinirlioglu. GEN Basbug, who had just returned from a visit to Swat Province in Pakistan, was very optimistic about the Pakistanis' counterinsurgency efforts. End Summary.

Israel: ASD Presses Turkey To Resume High-level Contacts

¶2. (C) ASD Vershbow stressed the importance of strong Turkey-Israel relations for regional stability. He regretted the decision to exclude Israel from exercise Anatolian Eagle and said that the U.S. could not continue its own participation in the exercise in that context. MFA Undersecretary Sinirlioglu agreed that the timing and lack of coordination with Washington of the GOT decision to exclude Israel was unfortunate and understood the U.S. decision, but said that the fundamentals of the Turkey-Israel relationship remained sound. He claimed that, as a neighbor of Iran, Turkey needed to take into account its sensitivities. He grumbled that while Turkey - Israel military exercises are good for the U.S. and for Israel, they are not necessarily always good for Turkey. He complained about the broad play that the cancellation of the exercise was getting in the press, especially considering all the work that had been done in Washington and Ankara to manage the public message. "When Israel makes a big deal out of things like Anatolian Eagle,

it plays into the hands of those who oppose good relations between Turkey and Israel," said Sinirlioglu.

13. (C) ASD Vershbow, while recognizing the complex domestic pressures in Turkey on dealing with Israel, pressed Turkey to resume senior-level contacts with Israel, and warned that recent steps may have damaged Turkey's credibility with Israel and thus its ability to engage with both sides on Middle East Peace Process issues. Sinirlioglu agreed to consider the suggestion, but said that Turkey expected to see first a positive step from Israel. He was disappointed that the Netanyahu government had "put everything on hold." He quoted FM Davutoglu's recent statement that "Israel and Turkey are natural partners. Vershbow again urged that Turkey "not hold back" on senior-level visits. Sinirlioglu said that Turkey would resume visits, but cautioned that "there should be some grounds for success."

Vershbow: Need To Deploy Incentives For Azerbaijan

14. (C) ASD Vershbow hailed the Turkish decision to reduce provocative overflights in the Aegean, and welcomed discussions with the new Greek government. Sinirlioglu agreed that relations were on a positive track and said the reduction in overflights as a success due to Amb Jeffrey's efforts. Turning to the Caucasus, Vershbow said that Azerbaijan was feeling politically isolated by the positive steps taken by Turkey and Armenia, and that the U.S. and Turkey needed to work together to find a way to get Azerbaijan to reach an agreement on Nagorno-Karabakh. Vershbow urged that Turkey work with the U.S. to develop

incentives to prevent this effort from stalling.

Turkey Unsure Of Pressing For Second Round Of Elections

15. (C) Sinirlioglu said that events in Afghanistan remained in the center of Turkey's attention; President Gul had discussed next steps on the elections with both President Obama and President Karzai in recent telephone calls. Turkey thought that it was unwise, after two months, to declare that Karzai did not have enough votes to win outright in the first round. He said that Karzai's Westward orientation was essential to the international community's goals in Afghanistan and that it was essential for Karzai to become the "president of all of Afghanistan, not just of the Pashtun population."

Iraq: Stability Essential

16. (C) Sinirlioglu said that Turkey was committed to working for stability in Iraq: "Iraq's stability is more important to us than to any other country in the world." He highlighted the efforts now underway, including the Prime Minister's recent visit to Baghdad with a delegation of Cabinet-level officials who signed a variety of agreements to deepen the relationship. Turkey was also working to develop its relationship with Iraqi Kurds. He said that Turkey was ready to work more closely with the U.S. to prepare for coming elections, which would be a watershed for the future of Iraq.

17. (C) In his meeting with the TGS Chairman, General Basbug, ASD Vershbow again urged continued restraint in the Aegean as a basis for engaging with the new Greek government on a long-term solution to the overflight issue. Basbug was more interested in discussing Pakistan. He had just returned from a visit to Mingora, in Swat Province, and was full of praise for Pakistani counterinsurgency efforts. He showed a video of his hero's welcome at an elementary school in Swat as evidence that normal life had been restored after 95 percent had been displaced just a few months earlier.

18. (U) ASD Vershbow has cleared this telegram.

JEFFREY

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